

# critical digest

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Jan 19, 1955 Vol VII No 19 The Weekly New York City Theatre Newsletter \$10-\$25 year  
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## New York Theatre Week

Time of Your Life- City Center 1/19. NYC Theatre Co 3rd limited run production. Revival of William Saroyan's play directed by Sanford Meisner, with Franchot Tone, Harold Lang, Myron McCormick... Passion of Grosse Pointe 1/22. Arthur Langer and Bernard Lubat present Harold Levitt's new play with Jack Gilford, Sylvia Short... The Grand Prize- Plymouth 1/26. Shepard Traube presents new comedy by Ronald Alexander. With June Lockhart, John Newland, directed by producer... Plain and Fancy- Hellinger 1.27. Kollmar & Gardiner present new musical comedy by Joseph Stein and Will Glickman, with music by Albert Hague and lyrics by Arnold Horwitt. Morton Da Costa directed cast with Richard Derr, Barbara Cook, David Daniels, Shirl Conway.

## Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

The Doctor's Dilemma-Phoenix 1/11. Split decision rendered by NY daily critics on Phoenix revival of Shaw play. Post, Journal American and World Telegram & Sun aisle sitters cheered it as a fine production of a fine play. Times and Herald Tribune critics filed mild "pros" with reservations, while Chapman, News, Panned it. News man though presentation merely presented a number of actors playing in different styles. Critic also doubted if many of the actors knew what they were acting. Pro side headed by Hawkins, WT&S, who billed it as an impeccable production of one of the wittiest plays of the language. Reviewer hopes show will extend run or move to another house. Geraldine Fitzgerald, Roddy McDowall, Shepperd Strudwick, Frederic Worlock shared critical honors. McClain, Journal American, agreed that play is given a beautiful production, but thought the script on the wordy side. Proper tempo and spirit was lacking from first night performance, noted Atkinson, Times. Shaw, critic reports, discusses the ethical problem involved with more vivacity than the present cast. Though Times man blamed director Sidney Lumet, Herald Tribune appraiser put part of the blame on the actors for the oppressive tone which results. Audience, he concluded, will still get much from play, but they will have to do most of the work.

## Why Reviews???

The growing tendency of legit producers to invite newspapers to skip opening nights and come again some other night is not a development to which Variety, for one, is inclined to lend encouragement, states Land, Variety. Reviews constitute a service to readers and only incidentally to producers. Where the producers let their fears take on a neurotic tinge, the trade paper editor notes, is in imagining that a critic's notice is what makes a bad play bad. Land suggests that the manuscript is usually the true reason.

## CD Expansion Plans

CD printed format will start soon. During the switch over period from the present style to the printed 11 by 17 folder with photos, sketches, etc, CD may be several days late and may come printed in several formats. CD hopes its readers will be patient. \$10 NYC weekly theatre newsletter will include all the present features plus an exclusive weekly interview with a talented young theatre personality, plus coverage of out of town theatre news and reviews. \$25 year service will include the weekly newsletter plus a weekly "Playgoer's Guide Chart" containing ticket and critical data on NY and out of town shows. A "Daily Digest of NYC Entertainment" designed for entertainment executives will also start soon. Rates on request.

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 " Off Broadway "  
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Russell-Farrow Productions Company will present Maurice Schwartz as star and director of 3 plays down in English at Downtown National starting Feb 16. Plays include The Grass is Always Greener by Sholom Aleicham, Moliere's The Miser and King Lear. Each production will run for 5 weeks.

New Repertory Theatre plans to present Edwin Justus Mayer's Children of Darkness as its opening bill sometime in Feb or March, maybe at the Bijou... June and the Paycock will be next production at Greenwich Mews... Passion of Gross moved opening date to Jan 22 at Theatre de Lys... Morris Carnovsky and Roger deKoven signed for Three Sisters due Feb 22 at 4th St Theatre... The Troublemakers will continue at President through Feb 20... American Theatre Wing is offering Stirling's Point of Beginning to churches of any denomination within a 50 mile radius of New York City. Writing and casting commissioned by the General Department of United Churchwomen of National Council of Churches.

Merchant of Venice production by Club Theatre was judged as very uneven by both Herridge, Post, and D.H. Women's Wear. They differed on their verdicts on individual actors. Post drama editor okayed Leslie Wood's Portia, but panned heavy handed solemnity of Clarence Derwent as Shylock. While Women's Wear man approved of Derwent's characterization.

The Troublemakers was found synthetic by Griff, Variety. Although realistic in form, play never seems quite real, trade paper critic panned. College students for most part, he feared, were types rather than individuals

The Chair, current production of Originals Only, seemed to be well acted and produced, judged McClain, Journal American from the part he saw. Sherri Windsor and Justine Johnston were applauded.

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 " Vaudeville "  
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"Carnival" is new Radio City Music Hall revue with Marilyn Murphy featured  
 ..New Palace bill headed by Rowena Rollins.

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 " Futures "  
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TIME OF YOUR LIFE	City Center	Jan 18
PASSION OF GROSS	De Lys	Jan 20
GRAND PRIZE	Plymouth	Jan 21
PLAIN & FANCY	Hellinger	Jan 22
MURDER IN CATH.	Chapel Of In.	Jan 23
THIEVES CAP.	Cherry Lane	Feb 1
WISTERIA TRELLIS	City Center	Feb 2
SOUTHWEST CORNER	Holiday	Feb 3
SAMARKAND	Morocco	Feb 7
DARK LIGHT E.	ANTA	Feb 9
DEEP HOURS	Barrymore	Feb 10
GOLDEN SPINER	Downtown N.	Feb 16
W-CARD SAINT		Feb 17
BUS STOP		Mar 2
BLACK STOCKINGS	Imperial	Feb 24

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 " Theatre TV Comments "  
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Arsenic and Old Lace CBS TV Best of Broadway production rated as best of star studded series by Gould, Times. Lindsay & Crouse personally supervised the adaptation, which may be one of reasons for its success. Chan, Variety, agreed, noting show finally hit jackpot. Mugg credited Helen Hayes superb job as the most important.

Yellow Jack NBC TV production was approved by Crosby, Herald Tribune, as a fine job in all departments, but he feared subject was dated. Van Horne, WT & S. thought play itself tedious, NBC thus wasted much talent on production.

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 " Theatre Record Comments "  
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Actor Mrs. Patterson original cast member was okayed for the excellent scene it provides Eartha Kitt, not for the songs, Variety reviewer noted. RCA version of Fanny provides plenty of listening pleasure, trade paper okayed.

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Green Room Department

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.. LEVEL OF TASTE...Though there is no such thing as a standard of good taste, there must be some general level of good manner. Good taste, states Chapman, News. This general level of good taste in the theatre, which caters to everybody, is much higher today than it was 25 years ago, critic surmises.

COLUMN TIPS...3640 singers auditioned for Street of Bleecker Street, reports Walker... Theatrical Subsidiaries, Inc. will install bars in NY legit theatres, with Ralph Alswang designing them, notes Kilgallen...Law suit to develop if 20th Century Fox releases Seven Year Itch before 1956, McCord, Herald Tribune, predicts.

THEATRE MAIL, BOX...Theatre audiences owe the theatre more than the price of admission, Times reader notes. They owe it their demand that cheap work, shoddy work, shallow, vulgar, specious work be hooted and jeered off the stage...Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller filed note with Herald Tribune drama desk refuting observation made by Eric Bentley in "The Dramatic Event" that Elia Kazan aided in writing A streetcar Named Desire and Death of a Salesman. A lie, they insist.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Watts, Post, thinks it is ashame that Tender Trap, which he rated as far funnier than Lunatics and Lovers, had to close despite a lively boxoffice. ...Sylvester, News, wishes the bongo drummers in House of Flowers would stop once in a while so he could find out what Harold Arlen's songs sound like.

BARE LEGIT FACTS...Bathtubs onstage are nothing new in the theatre, researches McClain, Journal American. The Women, South Pacific and other shows, including the present Lunatics and Lovers follow ed lead of Earl Carroll who had one of his showgirls caper in a tub filled with prohibition champagne at a press party in Atlanta. Carroll was convicted for "perjury" for the event.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Marguerite Shaw, Dean of Students at American University, Washington, D.C. is currently touring with road company of Pajama Game in the role of Mabel, the bookkeeper, Poteete, Herald Tribune, learned. Her sister, Reta plays the same role in the NY company. She is on indefinite leave from school.

NY THEATRE 100 YEARS AGO...1854-55 NY theatre season was not the best NY had ever experienced, concludes Burr, Playbill. Circus and circuses were the favorites that season. Burton's and Wallack's theatres stuck to drama. Former opened J E Duri- vage A Nice Young Man Christmas evening as their new play of season, while latter added French tidbit The Sisters to repertory.

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! Pros & Cons by TMK !

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The Doctor's Dilemma is given a neat, clean, though often static production at the Phoenix. With exception of Roddy McDowell who seems miscast, the actors present Shaw's ingenious attacks on professionalism in general, and the medical profession in particular. The fine acting of cast is sometimes hampered by director's insistence that all must sit still during even the longest speech. In spite of this, the production is a must for every theatre fan that likes meat with his theatrical gravy.

Coffee, corsets and costumes for dogs are a few of the free products which have received credits in recent Broadway programs. The vilest critic of TV can never accuse the new medium of listing such minute plugs.

Bars in the theatres should prove an important health factor. No longer will thirsty fans have to freeze to get that quick one to warm them up next door. This may not cure the common cold, but it will make the playgoers have to think up new excuses where their colds came from.



First out-of-town theatre tour of the newly formed Theatre Subsidiaries, Inc, is SRO. Trip to New Haven Jan 29 to see opening of Pajama Game. Rational company includes dinner at The Red Barn, Westport, Conn, and a midnight snack served en-route, all for \$14.50 per person. Each couple will also receive the Columbia LP album of show, perfume, and of course, a pair of pajamas. Several days after the newspaper ads and publicity announcing the event, the new company, headed by Alexander Cohen, announced that they were sold out, and that future checks would be returned.

### Plays

Reclining Figure, Caine Mutiny Court Martial closed...Wedding Breakfast which had announced its closing is continuing due to increase in business...Put Them All Together closed for repairs in Boston...Plain and Fancy which opens at Hellinger Jan 27 will move to Winter Garden Feb 26...Tea and Sympathy has announced its final weeks...Southwest Corner will open at Holiday Feb 2...Dark is Light Enough opening Feb 9 at ANTA will be limited to 12 week run...Silk Stockings pushed debut date to Feb 24 The Saint of Bleecker Street won NY Music Critics Circle 1954 award.

### People

Lynn Fontanne and Tallulah Bankhead missed one performance of Quadrille and Dear Charles, former due to virus, latter due to eye infection...John Gerstad replaces Elliott Nugent as director of Wayward Saint...Ben Gazzara signed for Cat on a Hot Tin Roof...Jerome Courtland joins Bus Stop...Louis Calhern will star next season in George Tabari's free adaption of School for Wives...Ward Morehouse, former drama columnist of NY World Telegram-Sun, signed as review editor and columnist of Colorado Springs Free Press.

### Other Broadways

Caine Mutiny Court Martial tour opens in Chicago Jan 31...Teahouse of August Moon had \$100,000 advance sale in Los Angeles...Christopher Fry's A Sleep of Prisoners produced by Jean-Louis Barrault nearly brought an audience riot during supporters of play and those who did not like it. Critics panned it as a waste...Don Swann's winter Hilltop Parkway Theatre, Baltimore, closed.

### Theatre Film Notes

20th Century Fox bought screen rights to Anastasia for a reported \$350,000... "Prince of Players" film will use top Shakespearian actors in Europe to dub in scenes in various foreign languages.

### Theatre TV Notes

ANTA Album will be telecast on closed circuit to theatres March 28 in joint benefit for ANTA and CARE. Max Gordon will produce and show will be telecast live from NY DuMont Adelphi Theatre. Theatres and ticket prices to be announced soon.

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CRITICAL DIGEST  
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First Class Mail

